

CITY COUNCIL
BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 4, 2016

The City Council Business and Community Affairs Committee of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met at 4:03 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room located at 201 West Gray on the 4th day of February, 2016, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted in the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:	Councilmembers Castleberry, Lang, and Chairman Heiple
ABSENT:	Councilmember Allison
STAFF PRESENT:	Mr. James Briggs, Park Planner II Ms. Susan Connors, Director of Planning and Community Development Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator Mr. Jud Foster, Director of Parks and Recreation Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Traffic Engineer Ms. Syndi Runyon, Administrative Technician IV

Item 1, being:

DISCUSSION REGARDING A BIKE SHARE PROGRAM.

Mr. James Briggs, Park Planner II, provided an overview of a Bike Share Program and said a Bike Share Program is not “free bikes.” The program includes purchasing a fleet of durable, trackable bikes, installing a main check-out “hub,” with multiple satellite hubs (for check-in/check-out), and all associated technology. On-going costs include a dedicated maintenance program and a per-year replacement of a portion of the bike fleet. Revenue from user fees and advertising at hubs can help finance the program as well as subsidies from the organization of the program. He said revenues can also come from allowing companies to place their emblem or logo on the bikes for a fee.

Mr. Briggs said targeted users and uses include short-distance commuters (best case for having multiple hubs around town); increased bike traffic equates to fewer automobiles on the road (less congestion); budget-wise for users when compared to cost of owning/maintaining an automobile; mental/physical/environmental health boost; and University population increases potential number of users.

Mr. Briggs said large cities such as Minneapolis, St. Paul, New York City, Boston, Chicago, Kansas City, Austin, Miami, Nashville, San Francisco, Washington D.C., etc., have large systems and operate with large budgets and large sponsors. Bike Share Programs are also found in smaller college towns, such as Des Moines, Madison, Charlotte, Boulder, and Omaha due to specific population/user demographics and are often sponsored or operated by the Universities.

Oklahoma City (OKC) launched the “Spokies” program in May 2012, with 95 bikes and seven hubs sponsored by Blue Cross and subsidized and maintained by the OKC Parking Authority. In 2011, Tulsa re-launched its “Townies” Program from 2007, with 50 bikes and three hubs along River Parks (an independent park system) operated by the River Parks Authority and are planning to launch a downtown program in 2017. Edmond’s University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) operates the “Bum-A-Bike” Program for students and faculty who are allowed to check the bikes out for two weeks at no charge. The Bum-A-Bike Program also includes an on-campus repair shop. Stillwater’s Oklahoma State University (OSU) operates the “Orange Ride” program for short or long time rentals and includes an on-campus repair shop.

The University of Oklahoma (OU) Student Government Association surveyed students about a Bike Share Program and there was overwhelming positive support. Mr. Briggs said OU Parking Services planned to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a third party vendor system in late 2015; however, that plan is currently on hold due to budget cuts. The Norman Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) has been receiving updates from OU about the potential program, but they have not proposed the City of Norman initiate a program. Ms. Vicky Holland, OU Parking and Transportation Marketing Manager, said the initial costs for third party operations is projected to be \$100,000 and \$60,000 annually for 50 bicycles and a yet undetermined number of hubs. She said due to budget restrictions, OU decided to delay issuing the RFP at this time, but may pursue that in 2017.

Mr. Briggs said capital and maintenance costs for a bike system has not been identified in current or future City budgets, but thought the City might consider partnering with OU on a joint system when OU initiates their program.

Mr. Angelo Lombardo, Transportation Traffic Engineer, said the Bike Share Program reminds him of when the Cleveland Area Rapid Transit (CART) service was first implemented. CART services originally started as a campus transportation option and as the program matured, CART approached the City about expanding the program and requested the City provide matching funds for that expansion. He said the rest is history and the BAC and Staff see that as a model for implementing a Bike Share Program in the City with OU taking the lead to establish the program in the campus area with the possibility of expanding later with subsidies from the City.

Chairman Heiple said the key to a successful program will be deciding how many bikes and hubs will be needed as well as deciding hub locations, which will be critical. He said bikes can cost anywhere from \$300 to \$1,000 and that will really depend on whether the City wants durability or lower costs. He felt the City should have a mobile app with the program technology because a mobile app makes all the difference in the world, just as much difference as a sturdy bike. He said Staff may want to look at quality versus quantity so bikes will last longer. He said OKC's program had a slight downfall when they purchased cheap bikes and Mr. Briggs agreed and said OKC has retooled the Spokies Program and changed vendors who provide sturdier bikes.

Mr. Briggs said when construction began on the Legacy Trail Apartments there was discussion from the developer regarding a bike share station as part of that project. The sidewalks for that project will connect to Legacy Park so a hub at Legacy Park makes sense. Mr. Briggs said extension of Legacy Trail is one of the Norman Forward projects so as that moves forward there could be space for a hub. He said having hubs at various locations makes it easier for people to check in bikes rather than keeping them and running up a huge fee just because there was not a hub nearby.

Chairman Heiple said bike gears can make a huge difference on whether or not someone rides a bike. He suggested the City recruit some college students to test out some bikes and let the City know which ones they would prefer. Councilmember Lang asked if the bikes from other comparable communities are three speed bikes and Chairman Heiple said yes, but some may be automatic. Councilmember Lang said automatic shifting will actually be less expensive over the long haul because there is less stress on the gears. He said the City needs to have a real vision of how the program will be used, i.e., is it recreational, to reduce car trips, or a combination of both? The program will depend on the use because if the City is trying to help students and citizens use their cars less, the City will need a practical bike that can be used to make retail trips whereas if the City is looking at more of a tourist use, bikes do not have to be as sturdy plus hub location needs will be entirely different for retail versus recreational use. Chairman Heiple agreed and said a tricycle type bike (three wheels) with a basket would probably be best for retail use and the City could offer two types of bikes.

Councilmember Lang said another decision would be whether or not lights will be needed to allow the bikes to be operable at night. He envisions a lot of trips between OU and downtown in the evenings. Councilmember Castleberry agreed and said, at this time of year, it gets dark early.

Mr. Briggs said it will also be important to have a repair shop for maintenance because that becomes a huge asset as the fleet grows.

Councilmember Lang said he has never seen a bike program that funds itself through riders, as the costs are always greater, so the City will need to decide where the money will come from to fund the program. He is not opposed to the program, but the City has to have a funding source since there will be ongoing costs.

Ms. Joy Hampton, The Norman Transcript, said she spoke with Mr. Hal Ezzell, an attorney involved with the Legacy Trail Apartments Project, and got the impression the developer was willing to install a small hub if they had permission from the City, since a portion of the property around the apartments is City property, and if there is a destination for riders such as Legacy Park. She said if that destination is Legacy Park or in that area and there is a protected crossing to and from the apartments on Rock Creek Road, perhaps University North Park Tax Increment Finance (UNPTIF) District funds could be used to pay for a hub with no additional bikes. She felt this could be a nice pilot project. She asked if the City has explored a pilot project with Legacy Trail Apartments and if a small amount of UNPTIF funds could be used for the project. Chairman Heiple said there have been discussions with the developer regarding concepts and ideas, but not about a Bike Share Program. Councilmember Castleberry said he would support a pilot program in that area and thinks Staff should reach out to the developer. Chairman Heiple said he thinks the developer's intent was to add a program as an amenity, but is really just thinking of ways to create a walkable, bikeable, healthy environment for their residents.

Ms. Hampton asked Mr. Jud Foster, Director of Parks and Recreation, if a pilot project for Legacy Park would be feasible and Mr. Foster said Legacy Park would potentially be a good location and would probably make more sense when more development has been completed in the northern area. He said details of who would be covering the costs of a program would have to be worked out. Mr. Briggs said funds are currently not within the City's budget and he is not sure which department in the City would be in charge of the program, i.e., who buys the bikes, who is responsible for maintenance, where are the best locations, etc.? Mr. Lombardo said most cities that have the program use a third party to run the program, buy the bikes, maintain the bikes, and help determine hub locations.

Councilmember Lang had concerns about a pilot program because the City needs to have a fair test and if there are only two hub points that will not be enough to determine whether or not a program would be successful. He said having only two hubs eliminates some of the research ability of what the bikes will be used for, but if two hubs were used in the UNPTIF area then tricycle bikes should be used to encourage shopping without cars. He is not opposed to a pilot project, he just wants to make sure the City is very clear on what results to expect.

Mr. Foster said an important step in the planning process would be to talk to vendors who do this type of program for a living in terms of an analysis and a recommendation on what makes sense as far as hub locations, number of bikes, maintenance issues, etc. Chairman Heiple agreed and said there is a real art to implementing these programs. Ms. Vicky Holland, Central Area Rapid Transit (CART), felt a joint effort between OU and the City would be critical as well and the Committee agreed.

Mr. Terry Floyd, Development Coordinator, said as the City starts thinking about hubs and how to move from Point A to Point B, it should keep in mind other projects going on in Downtown Norman, at OU, and on Campus Corner that could factor into those considerations. Councilmember Lang agreed said the perfect time to make those considerations is when infrastructure is built and rebuilt.

Items submitted for the record

1. Memorandum dated January 29, 2016, from James Briggs, Park Planner II, to BACA Committee Members
2. PowerPoint presentation entitled, "Bike Share Program (How other do it; and How it might happen in Norman)," dated February 4, 2016
3. Article entitled, "BikePortland.org – to Inform and Inspire – 4 things U.S. college towns could teach planners about biking," by Michael Anderson (News Editor), November 20, 2013

Item 2, being:

MISCELLANEOUS PUBLIC COMMENTS.

None

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Item 3, being:

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.